

3: Dixie Rd,
ph: 333 3 11

Dear Peter,

I want you to know that you have my unreserved support at this time. Its clear to me that you're being victimized and I'm sure that many parents also know this to be the case (at least the ones who know you at all).

Please be strong Peter, I know you must be going through hell at the moment but the truth will be known, and in the meantime there are people who care

Heather has her last day at Civic on Friday and kindly finishes a week later. The reality of this is just beginning to dawn on me - I will be childminding/parenting 7 days a week for 6 weeks!! eek!

If you need anything or just want to talk please feel free to phone/contact me.

Heather.

Peter,
In the light of the circumstances I am withdrawing my support. This is not "hate mail"; you can read it however you like. I feel that since I put my support in writing to you then I'll withdraw it in the same way. All that interests me now is the truth, for the sake of the children.

Heather

Peter

In the light of the circumstances I am withdrawing my support. This is not "hate mail", you can read it however you like. I feel that since I put my support in writing to you then I'll withdraw it in the same way. All that interests me now is the truth, for the sake of the children.

Heather.

Lynley Hood, *A City Possessed* (Dunedin: Longacre, 2001).

their offspring, yet they were abandoning them to strangers for their own selfish and mercenary reasons. Year-round, the volatile odour of parental guilt hung over the creche like petrol fumes.

But among creche families, the intense, professional parents were just one part of a diverse group. Ms Sycamore recalled:

One of the attractions to us was that the creche catered for a wide variety of people. There were people on social welfare subsidies who were stretched with their parenting skills. There were young people with strong views on how to parent, who were lost in the forest of this new game of raising children. There were relaxed, everyday, two-parent families where both parents worked. There were some very academic people. The staff coped with this amazing range extraordinarily well."

Most parents on social welfare subsidies were solo mothers, or women in the throes of relationship breakups. Some had histories of drug or alcohol abuse. At the time of the creche case, backgrounds of this sort were more common among the dozen or so families who were the source of ritual abuse allegations, and the more than 40 families who sought lump-sum compensation for the alleged abuse of their children (but uncommon among the 17 families whose children became involved in the court proceedings). A solo mother — whose child never disclosed any sexual abuse by any crèche worker — recalled her response to the compensation offer:

This counsellor said, 'You know you can claim \$10,000 from ACC.' She didn't even say 'up to', she just said '\$10,000'. I was on the benefit and that was a lot of money. Everyone was doing it. F didn't have a problem. Where do I sign? No problem. None whatsoever. The counsellor put in a report saying that my daughter was completely screwed up. I wondered if she'd got the kids muddled tip, or maybe she wrote the same report for everyone. Anyway, the money came through really quickly.³⁵

When scandal engulfed the crèche in November 1991, the parent group split. Some stood firmly behind the staff, some became complainants. Others supported one group or the other. Most walked away. To the bewilderment of the staff, the groups they considered most likely to support them — the parents who had enthused over the crèches politically correct policies, and the parents they had supported through their personal crises — were the ones who turned on them when the chips were down.

By the time the case reached the courts, the parents who did not walk away had formed two distinct groups. The flag bearers for one

³⁵ Confidential audiotaped interview, 15 June 1998.